1: Fedotov S-4 (no date) 1954 RF1 Great Russia RF1

The Russian*

By G. P. Fedotov

What terms, what concepts shall we use to characterize "Russianness?" If it is difficult to reduce the live multiformity of the individual to a system of concepts, how much harder is it to define the still more complex multiformity of the collective personality. It is always given to us as a unity of widely divergent, often conflicting individualities. To find their common denominator is impossible. What have Pushkin, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy in common? Try to isolate their common essence—and you will find next to nothing. And yet there can be no valid definition of Russianness that would exclude Pushkin, Dostoevsky, and so many others who do not resemble them at all. A foreigner is more likely to grasp the common element that eludes us. But then, most generalizations by foreigners bear the stamp of insufferable banality. Our own evaluations of the French, the German, the English national character are certainly in no way better.

The difficulty is apparently insurmountable. The only way out would be to renounce a fallacious monism and to portray the collective soul as a unity of opposites. The multiformity that would otherwise submerge us may then be reduced to the polarity of two further irreducible types. Not the circle, but the ellipse is the appropriate diagram of the collective personality. The two centers of the ellipse create the tension which alone makes possible the life and the movement of the constantly changing collective organism. All its manifestations may be traced to the one or the other of the two centers. To some extent this scheme does violence to reality—less drastically, however, than do monistic conceptions. On closer examination, each of the two centers will appear to us as a multiplex unity that can be resolved into its component elements. This may be no more than a working method, but it is one that justifies itself by results. If it fails to satisfy our—plainly unrealizable—longing for a spiritual-national monism (which can manifest itself only in the ultimate harmony of the Kingdom of God), it yet explains reason-

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1: Fedotov S-4 (no date) 1954 RF1 Great Russia RF1

ably well the nature of the historical process, the drama of the perpetual dissensions and crises, and the very possibility of development.

If today, in exile, we ask this or that émigré of the rank and file to describe the Russian character, we are sure to be offered two contrasting pictures. As often as not these different images correspond to the political camp of the émigré. To those of the Right and to those of the Left, Russia and the Russian show a different face.

Let us have a look at the left-wing image. This Russian is a lifelong seeker after truth, an enthusiast serving ideals with self-sacrificial ardor but frequently changing his gods and idols. He is utterly devoted to the people, to art, to ideas; eager to become a martyr for some noble cause; an irreconcilable foe of dishonesty, of compromise. An extremist in his dedication to ideas, he lives in the clouds and is estranged from reality—rootless, yet a saint in the full meaning of the word, a saint above material interests. Of the four elements, he is closest to fire and most alien to the earth—and yet he wishes to serve the earth, envisaging this service in terms of flame, conflagration, molten metal. In terms of religion, his is the eschatological type of Christianity—without a terrestrial home, but thirsting for the City of God. Or rather in search of a "New Heaven" and a "New Earth." He loathes nothing so much as moderation, regularity, the virtues of restraint and reasonableness, the smugness of a self-complacent culture. Culture, as the realm of consummate form, leaves him cold; he dreams of remolding all forms in his own crucible. The process of creation is more important to him than its product, the search for truth more important than truth itself, heroic death more important than a life full of labor. Usually he regards Belinsky as his ancestor and (today!) Dostoevsky as his supreme spokesman. It is not difficult to recognize in this image the self-portrait of the Russian intelligentsia,—not of the Russian educated class as a whole, but of that "order" whose origin goes back to the eighteen thirties.

However, the intelligentsia, this latest layer of Russian culture, is not entirely lacking in national roots—or, more exactly, counterparts. For here we have to do not with the direct influence of deep popular forces but with the obscure subconscious play of the folk-soul, which in the destiny of these pseudo-renegades of nation and country repeats the features of another type, deeply embedded in the national psyche. Apostates, runaways, seekers, pilgrims—are

1: Fedotov S-4 (no date) 1954 RF1 Great Russia RF1

found not only on the upper level but also in the lowest stratum of the people. We meet them among the adherents of the numerous religious sects as well as among the wider circle of spiritually disturbed Russian men and women, restless seekers after religious truth. They embody the kenotic, Christ-centered brand of Russian religiosity, eternally opposed to the prevailing ritualism in liturgy and customs. These kenotic forces of folk religiosity were released by the schism of the seventeenth century, when the Church lost its former unity. The quest for a new spiritual haven began with the first doubts about the absolute orthodoxy of the Muscovite-Petersburg tsardom. Thus this national type, so vividly brought to life by the Russian literature of the nineteenth century, while comparatively of late formation, is yet much older than the intelligentsia and approximately coincides with the Empire. This does not mean that it did not spring from more ancient sources: it had a forerunner in the kenotic type of ancient Russian holiness. But its estrangement from reality, its restlessness, stamp it as a spiritual phenomenon belonging to modern history.

It is interesting to note that the Russian intelligentsia, beside its popular counterparts, has still another parallel, ever more noticeable towards the close of the nineteenth century. It is the Jewish parallel. It is not an accident that ever since the eighties, with the beginning of the exodus from the ghetto, an intimate fusion of the Russian-Jewish intelligentsia became apparent—not only in the common revolutionary struggle but in all spiritual aspirations and the essential attitude towards life: the ardent rootlessness, the eschatological prophetism. It was a spiritual atmosphere which in its intensity recalls early Christianity—deprived, however, of the central pivot of faith and therefore apt to breed aberrations of the most fanatically sectarian kind. Russian reactionaries are right in linking the intelligentsia with Judaism. But they distort the historical perspective in representing the Jews as the seducers of innocent Russian youth. The "order" of the Russian intelligentsia had long been in existence and had taken up the fight against autocracy at a time when the influx from the ghetto—attracted by spiritual affinity—had hardly begun. It is this affinity that makes the short-sighted Western observer describe the "âme slave" in Jewish terms. While many are inclined to view the Zionist endeavor in Palestine as the work of Russian intellectuals, Spengler regards the coteries of the Russian intelligentsia—which he abhors—as reflecting the spirit and tradition of the Talmudists. There certainly

1: Fedotov S-4 (no date) 1954 RF1 Great Russia RF1

181 517 was prevalent a specific Russian-Jewish atmosphere, of which a Jewish poet has said: "Blessed he who ever breathed that air."

000 And yet, only a foreigner may be forgiven for not distinguishing between Slavic and Semitic features in the amalgam of the intellectual-sectarian type. Surely there was nothing Jewish in Belinsky; and when Tolstoy spoke of Dostoevsky's Jewishness, he meant it, of course, in the widest metaphorical sense. The difference is subtle but plainly perceptible—rather one of style, of aesthetic pattern, than of ethical contents—which, after all, is true of most national distinctions. The kinship between the intelligentsia and popular sectarianism, on the other hand, is a primary phenomenon, sufficient in itself to establish this type of intellectual as one of the historical formations of the Russian soul.

181 157 I believe that many, and not only among the right-wingers, will refuse to acknowledge the intelligentsia as the deepest manifestation of Russianness. To myself, whenever today, in exile, I try to conjure up a pure image of the Russian, he presents himself under a different aspect. Profound calm, taciturnity, on the surface even apathy. An organic aversion for anything high-flown, high-strung, extravagant. Simplicity often carried so far as to shun a word, a gesture too much. "Silence is golden." Serene, self-confident power. The silence reflects profound Oriental experience absorbed in the blood. Hence a strain of fatalism. Hence also the humor—the tolerant smile at the foreground of life, at the ceaseless fretting and fussing of the intellect. Humor and restraint are features this type of Russian shares with the Anglo-Saxon. In the opinion of some, by the way, only the Russians and the English possess a genuine sense of humor. Tolstoy and his set—the "high society" of Anna Karenina—in all of Europe felt most at home in the Anglo-Saxon world, the only one they respected. However, this superficial similarity covers a vastly divergent experience—Western activism and Oriental fatalism; but in both worlds the violence of elemental forces was tamed by centuries-old discipline.

I shall not attempt here to define the moral aspect of this type of Russian. I believe that, as a rule, one should avoid over-precise moral characterizations of national types. The good and the wicked, the vicious and the pure are found among all of them, probably in the same proportion. What matters are the shades of goodness, of purity etc., the "how" and not the "what,"—which means definitions rather in aesthetic (in the widest sense) terms. Is the Russian kind? Quite often he is. When he is, his kindness combined with

1: Fedotov S-4 (no date) 1954 RF1 Great Russia RF1

his own peculiar quiet wisdom, produces one of the finest human types. How we long for it in our warped life, swayed as we are by all kinds of passions—and be it spiritual passions! But the Russian can be cruel too—this we know well by now—and not only in a brief flare-up of fury but in a smugly callous, ruthlessly selfish way. Most often he amazes us by a kind of Oriental indifference to the lot and the sufferings of others—coupled with gentleness and superficial compassion (Karataev!). There is something Chinese in the impassive attitude of the Russian peasant towards his own and his fellowmen's death. This kind of wisdom takes us beyond the limits of Christianity. Tolstoy was profoundly aware of the primeval, prehistoric roots of this indifference ("The Three Deaths").

Nor is it easy to generalize about the volitional nature of the Russian. Is he indolent or active? More often than not he appears lazy; he works under pressure, pulling himself together only at the very last; but then he does not spare himself and is capable of making up in a few days for months of idleness. But there are also Russians of dogged industry, performing their tasks with restrained but intense passion; such were to be found among kulaks, inventors, scientists, even administrators. The amorphous mass of the people readily submits to the leadership of this sturdy élite, while seldom respecting it. Without this ruthless and strong-willed type the creation of the Empire, and even of the Muscovite state, would have been unthinkable.

In mentioning the Muscovite state, we are offering a clue to the understanding of this second brand of Russian. Its embodiment is the Muscovite, as his hard historical destinies have shaped him. For two or three centuries rough hands had been at work kneading the Slavic dough, knocking, bruising, breaking in the recalcitrant stuff, molding it into an extremely tenacious form. The Petrine Empire overlaid the Muscovite tsardom with a varnish of European culture, but it was still the Muscovite type that remained the real mainstay. To this type belong all those classes that were little touched by the Petersburg culture. All the clergy, the merchant class, the thrifty part of the peasantry (insofar as it was not undermined by spiritual restlessness). We meet this type again in the great Russian literature, where it is, however, pushed into the background by later spiritual formations. It is reflected most vividly in the regional literature—the writings of Aksakov, Leskov, Melnikov, Mamin-Sibiriak. And Tolstoy, of course. Although he cannot be fitted altogether into the Muscovite mold, he stemmed from it, had a

1: Fedotov S-4 (no date) 1954 RF1 Great Russia RF1

181 157 538 deep fondness for this type, and was apt to idealize it. Karataev, Kutuzov, Levin are Muscovites; and so are Captain Mironov and Maxim Maximovich—Muscovite state servants who have survived the Petrine upheaval. The plodding official under Nicholas I, so ill-treated by the satirical literature of the time, represents the last layer of the Muscovite formation. We meet this type also on the highest cultural level: Pososhkov, Bolotov, the Aksakovs, Zabelin, Kliuchevsky—all these are authentic Muscovites. Here is the source of Russian creative power—which, however, like all things ultra-national, is rather limited in outlook. The narrow-mindedness of Tolstoy and Mussorgsky can assume truly tragical forms.

181 157 Such are the two polar types of Russianness, to whose conflict the high drama of the nineteenth century is largely due. They may be regarded as the expression of the basic dualism inherent in the Russian soul. They are, however, only the latest historically conditioned manifestations of this duality. Of all the successive cultural layers of the Russian soul, they represent the Muscovite stratum and that latest formation, the intelligentsia, born in the eighteen-thirties. But the historical approach to the problem of the Russian character makes it imperative to look beyond the limits of this duality. Between Muscovy and the intelligentsia there lies the Empire. Nor did Russia begin with Muscovy. What remains today of the Russian of the Empire, the Russian of the Kievan era, of Novgorod?

When, basing our claim on Pushkin, we assert with Dostoevsky that the Russian is a universalist, and that in this lies his national mission, it is actually the imperial Russian we have in mind. Universality is characteristic neither of the Muscovite nor of a true representative of the intelligentsia. On the contrary, the distinctive feature of both is narrow-mindedness, sectarianism. The Petrine reform, however, had brought Russia out into the open spaces of the world, had placed her at the crossroads of all the great Western civilizations and had brought into being the species of the Russian-European. His main attribute is freedom and openness of mind—such as to set him apart not only from the Muscovite but also from the European of the West. European culture, taken as a whole, was more intensely alive on the banks of the Neva or Moskva than on those of the Seine, the Thames, or the Spree. It is this imperial upper-class stratum that has given rise to the myth of the Russian's peculiar gift for foreign languages. Actually the average Russian,

1: Fedotov S-4 (no date) 1954 RF1 Great Russia RF1

whether Muscovite or of the intelligentsia, is totally devoid of linguistic ability and finds it hard to adjust himself to strange countries and alien surroundings. But the Russian-European felt at home everywhere.

Throughout the two centuries of his existence, we have known him in two incarnations: the wanderer and the builder. Weak natures were easily crushed by the wealth of the alien culture. The conflict between the traditional Russian values and those of the new Westernized life was apt to generate skepticism, shallowness and premature weariness. Beginning with the "petits-maîtres" of the eighteenth century, "whose hearts belonged to the French Crown," a long chain of so-called "superflous people," including the Onegins, Rudins, Raiskys, stretches across Russian literature. Not so long ago it was customary to regard this as the basic trend of Russian life. This is a stupendous misunderstanding, a historical-literary aberration. We are well acquainted with another type of Russian-European—one that had retained the strong will of the Muscovite, his bond with the motherland, and sometimes even his religious faith. It was men like these who built the Empire, who fought its wars and made its laws, who sowed the seeds of enlightenment. Such were "the fledglings of Peter's nest," although in fairness it must be admitted that this type had come into being before Peter's time. Its genealogy begins with the Boyar Matveev, with Ordyn-Nashchokin, maybe even with Kurbsky. They reached their culminating point in the era of Alexander I. Under him they occupied the highest government posts. There was no rift yet between government and culture. Pushkin, "the bard of Empire and of freedom," was the last great embodiment of that imperial type. It did not, however, completely disappear even after the break between monarchy and culture under Nicholas I. In the "Era of the Great Reforms" the "Russian-Europeans" for a time came again into their own. We saw "the last Mohicans" of the type ourselves in the Senate and the Imperial Council under the last two tsars; deprived of power and influence, they still retained their rich experience, their political wisdom, alas! no longer needed by the degenerate dynasty. But on a lower level, within the administration, the courts, the liberal professions, the local self-government, and, of course, the universities, it was largely the "Europeans" who carried on their shoulders the whole burden of cultural activities under excruciatingly difficult conditions. Nearly always they shunned politics in order to concentrate on the only tasks open to them.

1: Fedotov S-4 (no date) 1954 RF1 Great Russia RF1

181 Hence their lack of popularity in a country that for generations had
157 been breathing the exhalations of civil war. Nevertheless, in every city, every district, these zealots of culture left some achievement behind them—here a school, there a learned society, a model farm, or just the memory of a dedicated physician, a humane judge, a noble man. It was they who preserved Russia from stagnating and freezing up at a time when every effort was made from above to put her on ice, and from below to set her aflame. While the Muscovite formed the backbone of Russia, the Russian-European was her builder. However, as we have pointed out, this creative, constructive type derived itself from Muscovite roots. While his lifework often compelled the "European" to wage a tenacious fight against the Muscovite's inertia and indolence, he yet shared with the latter a common moral ideal, a common love of Russia and her "soul." Kliuchevsky's history and Russian music were his link with Moscow. Whenever this link crumbled away, he would become a rolling-stone, no longer capable of constructive work. Under certain circumstances he might turn into an "intellectual"; this is the upper-class source of the intelligentsia, quite distinct from its democratic springs. But so long as he stood at his post, performing some vital task, he remained loyal to Russia and to the Muscovite principle of service. In the beginning of the twentieth century, notably after the revolution of 1905, the creative Russian-European element showed signs of impetuous growth at the expense of the intelligentsia. It looked as if the future belonged to it. . . . Fate decided differently.

181 What features of the Russian may be traced to the early Russia of warring principalities and free city-republics? Fully aware that we are embarking upon arbitrary and even fantastic speculations, we yet venture an answer: that aspect of the Russian character usually called its "largeness"; its unruliness; its rebelliousness—neither ideological nor sectarian—but rooted in a deep organic aversion to any kind of rigid form. Even today, the Russian heart still responds to the ancient chronicles, to the "Lay of Prince Igor." To state it boldly: it is not the stern builders of Empire, and not the statesmen, who most strongly appeal to Russian national emotions, but the knightly princes, the dare-devil Mstislavs, the Viking Sviatoslav, the tumultuous freedom of Novgorod. Muscovy certainly never succeeded in wholly disciplining the Slavic unruliness. It erupted in the free Cossack communities, in the sporadic uprisings; in the nineteenth century it found an outlet in debauchery and high living, in fantastic dissipation, in the bohemianism and

1: Fedotov S-4 (no date) 1954 RF1 Great Russia RF1

artistic trend of the Russian character. This side of the Russian soul finds a most adequate expression in the gipsy song and dance. Russian debauchery is often somber and heavy, an effect, maybe, of Tartar blood and Muscovite oppression; but it can also be gay, generous, magnanimous. Such were the revelries of Pushkin, who combined Europeanism with Russian reckless freedom. Many talented Russians have succumbed to their nature (A. Grigoriev); and yet this characteristic, so long as it is to some extent held in check by self-discipline and education, is inseparable from Russian genius. "How fond I am of drunks!" Tolstoy once inadvertently confessed.

Gloom and childlike gaiety are the two poles of Russian unruliness. In the mood of youthful light-heartedness, generosity, sparkling high spirits, the Russian character is at its most attractive. This gaiety, however, is ephemeral. Unaccountable joy does not satisfy the Russian for long. He is likely to come to a grim and tragic end. If he fails to settle down in time (Muscovite fashion), his end is a ruined life, or a monk's hood.

Is it possible to penetrate still deeper into the Russian soul—beyond Kiev and Novgorod, beyond the threshold of history? If we remove, like skin after skin from a bulb, the successive cultural layers deposited by history, shall we find in the Russian a central irreducible core? It may be that our question is not posed correctly. The national soul is not given in history. The ethnic psyche serves only as the raw material of history. That psyche, moreover, is not all of a piece: Slavs, Finns, Turks,—all have gone into the making of the Russian soul. A nation is not a tree or an animal whose potentialities are all enclosed in the seed. The nation is rather to be compared to a musical or poetical work whose first measures or lines do not necessarily convey the main theme. Sometimes this theme is not revealed until the very end. It may be that in this sense (as revelation of an idea) the nineteenth century was more truly national than Kiev or Muscovy. Without assuming in any way that Slavic paganism contained in embryo the idea of Russianness (how could we differentiate here between Eastern and Southern Slavs—between Russians and Bulgars or Serbs?)—we yet believe it worthwhile to peer into this mysterious depth. Better than other civilized peoples we have preserved the organic, pre-Christian foundations of the national soul. Deep at the root of the greatest masterpieces of Russian literature there is something akin to the primitivism of folklore. Tiutchev, Tolstoy, Rozanov have distilled, as it

1: Fedotov S-4 (no date) 1954 RF1 Great Russia RF1

181 157 were, in the apparatus of high spiritual pressure, the primordial stuff of Russian paganism.

Where shall we look for a key to it? We cannot go here beyond a few suggestions, the first steps leading down into the subterranean galleries of the Russian soul. Some time ago W. W. Weidlé (*Sovremennye Zapiski*, No. 64) attempted, rightly so in my opinion, to link this Russian essence with the family principle. As late as the nineteenth century, the Russian-Slav was not yet wholly estranged from Mother-Earth. His intimate union with the world of nature makes individual existence difficult and strange. Nature for him is not landscape, not a background for his daily life, and still less, of course, an object of conquest. He is embedded in her as in the maternal womb; he responds to her with all his being; apart from her he dries up and cannot live. He has not realized yet the frightfulness of her ruthless beauty, the frightfulness of death—since there is nothing in him that can die. All that is valuable and lofty in the human being is generic, communal, indestructible. And that which is individual is not worth immortality. The moral law of the individual, his right to his own conscience, to self-determination—these things have no validity in face of the law of life. In the moral sphere this attitude leads to communal, collective ethics based on the principle of mutual responsibility. In art it generates an enormous power of sensuous perception and suggestion (derived from Gea, the Earth), which is offset by weakness of form and of individual creative design. In the pursuit of knowledge it leads, of course, to irrationalism and reliance on intuition. In work and social life it leads to distrust of all planning, system, organization. The Slavophile ideal, for all its consciously Christian character, is strongly imbued with this pagan element of the Slavic psyche. In the life of the common people, however, we find it already sublimated by the Church and, this has led to the widely held assumption that it forms the very essence of Eastern Christianity. Actually it has nothing to do with Christianity; rather it takes us far eastwards. Another step, and we are in India with her total obliteration of the individual.

The question arises: where in this historically stratified scheme of the Russian soul is its Christian, its Orthodox layer? The truth is that there is more than one such layer, since there are actually as many brands of Russian Christianity as there are historical types of the Russian, and maybe more. Just as every nation experiences Christianity in its own way, so every cultural stratum of a nation

1: Fedotov S-4 (no date) 1954 RF1 Great Russia RF1

has its own key to Christianity, or at least its own nuances of it. There is no need, however, to distinguish between fine shades of Christianity in the Russian soul; all the contradictions stand out with stark boldness. Just try to express in one formula the religiosity of St. Sergius and the Archpriest Avvakum, that of the Metropolitan Philaret and of Dostoevsky. For good measure, add to these Greek-Orthodox folklore and the religion of Tolstoy!

The opinion is widely held that the Russian people are set apart from other European peoples by the peculiar intensity of their religiosity. Actually this impression derives from the fact that the twentieth century finds Russia and the rest of Europe in different acts of the religious-historical drama. In Russia, among the great mass of the people, the Middle Ages lived on right down to the middle of the nineteenth century. The Europe of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries would offer a closer analogy to imperial Russia. But the collapse of Russian medievalism was stormy and destructive in the extreme. Today the attitude towards religion, both on the part of the masses and of the intelligentsia, is not markedly different from that in other European countries.

. . . And now let us turn to our basic problem: which historical layers of the Russian soul have been destroyed by the Revolution and which will survive it? The answer now should be clear. The extermination of the old educated class and the suppression of all the sources that fed it were bound to remove the two uppermost strata from the spiritual structure of Russian society. The man of Empire and the intellectual perished together with the "bourgeoisie," the upper layer of the old society. As to the imperial type, the Russian of universal culture, some relics of it still survive within the ranks of the "specialists." Some time ago, the [Soviet] government belatedly realized that the liquidation of the upper cultural stratum was doing irreparable harm to technical progress. The surviving old-timers became the object of special attention. However, they were valued only in their capacity of specialists in some narrow field; as has been wittily said, golden watches were used to drive in nails. Their broad culture, no longer needed by anyone and even offensive to the new ruling class, still subsists within some tiny groups or even families. The new educated class produces exclusively specialists who often lack the rudiments of a general culture, even plain literacy. On the other hand, never since the Muscovite tsardom has Russia been fenced off from Europe by such a high wall. This wall has been erected not only by censorship and

l: Fedotov S-4 (no date) 1954 RF1 Great Russia RF1

178 181 517 the ban on foreign travel, but also by inordinate conceit and outright contempt for decaying bourgeois Europe. Here lies the essential difference between the semi-literate technical intelligentsia of Tsar Peter and a similar intelligentsia under Stalin. That of Stalin has deliberately turned its back on Europe and in so doing has cut short the line of the "universal" Russian.

More complex was the fate of the intelligentsia proper. By the time the revolution broke out, this extraordinary formation had already lost its former vitality. After 1905 the intelligentsia began to dissolve, losing its identity within the whole of the "cultured" class. It was unable to survive the collapse of its political mysticism, desecrated by the pathetic Russian constitutionalism; the new brilliant religious-philosophical culture of the Russian renaissance of the twentieth century demoralized it with its many seductions; the war drew it into the stream of a national consciousness new to it. By 1917 the revolutionary enthusiasm of the intelligentsia was already a warmed-up dish. Its roots did not go deep, and the size of this social group, the only one to give loyal support to the Provisional Government, had shrunk considerably. The October Revolution hit it with all its weight. Dedicated to principles and uncompromising, the intelligentsia was utterly unable to acquiesce in the triumph of brute force. No wonder that the struggle against the new rulers bled it white. The few who survived either went into exile or filled Soviet prisons and concentration camps. Some managed to adjust themselves to the conditions of Soviet bureaucracy and turned into "specialists," gradually losing the last features of their noble "order." The mills of a brutal way of life were grinding without mercy. In the words of a Russian proverb—"to live with wolves one has to howl with them." Those unable to adjust themselves were cast out of the new life. The new intelligentsia now emerging is organically devoted to the Soviet régime; it feels a blood kinship with both the people and the ruling class. And for this reason it can never—not even in opposition, not even (let us anticipate the future) engaged in a revolutionary struggle against those in power—degenerate into that rootlessly-ideological, extremist, and eschatological type, let alone the dedicated fraternity we call the Russian intelligentsia.

However, this defunct Russian type is not entirely without successors. Sectarianism and spiritual journeying have not died out in the people, as insistently testified by the "godless" press. The Revolution has even given rise to some new sectarian formations,

1: Fedotov S-4 (no date) 1954 RF1 Great Russia RF1

usually of an eschatological nature. On the other hand, part of the old intelligentsia have found a spiritual foothold in the Church. Here the last remnants of the vanished "order" can quench their spiritual thirst from the same spring that, unknown to them, had generated it. Within the Church they have, of course, preserved their psychological characteristics: their restlessness and extremism, their thirst for an integrated, consecrated life. Here they find themselves on common ground with the searchers and pilgrims of the people. One should keep in mind that the spiritual barrier between Church and dissenters is no longer what it was before the Revolution. Persecution has brought the various creeds closer together. The remnants of the old intelligentsia act as a ferment upon the whole religious mass. So far, however, this force has either been completely eliminated from all constructive cultural work or else has voluntarily turned away from it. Insofar as Russian culture of the immediate future is concerned, the old type of intellectual is definitely extinct.

What remains is the Muscovite with his vague ancestral heritage. The masses of the people who, molded by Soviet schools, produce the new human being, until quite recently lived and thought after the Muscovite pattern. The most radical ideological upheaval is powerless wholly to remake a spiritual mold. In the internationalist, the Marxist of today, whoever he may be, it is easy to recognize the village lad, the factory worker, as we remember them from the turn of the century. Paradoxical as it may sound, *homo Europaeo-Americanus* seems closer to Muscovy than to the more recent Petersburg era. The paradox is easily explained. *Homo Europaeo-Americanus* has little claim on the rich heritage of Europe's culture. He emerged in Europe in the period of her barbarization and assimilated a civilization already narrowed down to its athletic, technical, military contents. The savage of our time, technician or athlete, is the product of the disintegration of ancient culture going hand in hand with the absorption of barbarians into the civilized world. The Muscovite who, biding his time in rural Russia, outlasted two centuries of imperial culture, does not need any great effort to keep step with a Europe that has come to curse the last two centuries of her history. What might seem really amazing is the ease with which religion has been repudiated. But this is a special, highly complex theme. As to everything else, the Muscovite lout only had to be shaken up and kicked around for a while, to be jolted out of his indolence and sluggishness. What the tsarist barracks once did to

1: Fedotov S-4 (no date) 1954 RF1 Great Russia RF1

181 the recruit, the Party and the Komsomol are doing today—training country bumpkins and turning them into disciplined soldiers. The Muscovite provides admirable material for discipline, military discipline in particular. He formed the backbone of the old imperial army, the best in the world, maybe, in quality of manpower. The age-old habit of obedience, the weakness of individual consciousness and of the desire for freedom, the greater ease of living within a collective body and of working in a team—all this forms a bond between the Soviet citizen and Muscovy of yore. Muscovy had by no means been poor in social forces, rather the reverse; they had been so strong as to smother the individual; it was not without reason that the Muscovite national economy had a semi-socialist character. Stalin today consciously strives to establish himself as the successor of the tsars and the hetmans. Tsar and Pugachov in one. . . . The transfer of the capital back to Moscow is a symbolic act. The Revolution has failed to destroy the Russian national type but has appallingly crippled and impoverished it.

The Russian unruliness is, of course, indestructible. It was strong in the Muscovite tsardom; it is still there under Stalin. It ran riot in the violence of the first years of the Revolution; it finds a blatant outlet today in the debauchery which constantly undermines the foundations of Communist discipline; it is alive in the reckless daring of Russian fliers and arctic explorers. All that is colorful today in Russian life and Russian art is reminiscent of the heroic periods of Russian history. Russian unruliness, while not the same as freedom, still saves the face of contemporary Russia from the universal, uniform stigma of slavery. Strong natures still seek and find outlets for their energy. And the presence of these forces strengthens our hope of liberation—however remote it may still appear.

000 And what about the deepest—Slavic-pagan—layers of the Russian soul? To what extent have they been preserved? This we do not know. The powerful process of rationalization ruthlessly destroys all that is subconscious and elemental, fills up all the deep wells, renders the Russian character shallow and transparent. But is the process completed? Are there no remote corners left where ancient beliefs are still alive, where the primordial bond with Mother-Earth has not been broken? After all, village sorcery and shamanism are by no means dead, as we are informed from time to time by Soviet ethnographers. Why should there not be traces somewhere of the dimmer and subtler complexes of the tribal pantheistic psyche? We know that something of this must be there; surely Prishvin does not

1 Fedotov S-4 (no date) 1954 RF1 Great Russia RF1

write in a vacuum—he must have sympathetic readers. What we do not know is whether these survivals are sufficient to feed once again a great literature. For in this alone lies the significance of this dark Russian area. Should it vanish, Russian literature may lose, maybe forever, its subterranean springs. Lacking a sense of form, it can never achieve anything like the culture of formal perfection created by the Latin and the French genius. Its course is different. Even the spiritual depth of a Dostoevsky affords a glimpse of another—earthy—depth, that of the Shatovs and the Karamazovs. . . .

Regretfully we admit that we have found no definite answer to our problem. With the question still open, we now conclude our preliminary study of the post-revolutionary Russian as the potential creator of a Russian culture of the future.